

BLINDFOLDED

A Mystery Story
of San Francisco

BY
EARLE ASHLEY WALCOTT

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The presence of Terrill gave me some tremors of anxiety, for I knew that his unscrupulous ferocity would stop at nothing. Then I reflected that the presence of Doddridge Knapp's daughter was a protection against an attack from Doddridge Knapp's agents, and I followed the party into the heathen temple without further apprehensions.

The temple was small, and the dim, religious light gave an air of mystery to the ugly figure of the god and the trappings of the place.

"That's one of the richest carvings ever brought into this country," said Corson, pointing to a part of the altar mounting. "Ten thousand dollars wouldn't touch one side of it."

"You don't say!" cried Mrs. Bowser, while the rest murmured in the effort to admire the work of art. "And is that stuff burning for a disinfectant?"

She pointed to numerous pieces of punk, such as serve the small boy on the Fourth of July, that were consuming slowly before the ugly joss.

"No, ma'am—not but they needs it all right enough," said Corson, "but that's the haythen way of sayin' your prayers."

This information was so astonishing that Corson was allowed to finish his explanation without further remarks from Mrs. Bowser.

"I'll show you the theater next," said he, as he led the way of the temple with Mrs. Bowser giving her views of the picturesque heathen in questions that Corson found no break in the conversation long enough to answer. As I lingered for a moment in some depression of spirit, waiting for the others to file out, a voice that thrilled me spoke in my ear.

"Our guide is enjoying a great favor." It was Luella, noticing me for the first time since the expedition had started.

"He has every reason to be delighted," I returned, brightening at the favor I was enjoying.

"Foreign travel is said to be of great value in education," said Luella, taking my arm, "but it's certainly stupid at times."

I suspected that Mr. Carter had not been entirely successful in meeting Miss Knapp's ideas of what an escort should be.

"I didn't suppose you could find anything stupid," I said.

"I am intensely interested," she retorted, "but unfortunately the list of subjects has come to an end."

"You might have begun at the beginning again."

"He did," she whispered, "so I thought it time he tried the guide or Aunt Julia."

"Thank you," I said.

"Thank him, you mean," she said. "I'll now don't be stupid yourself, so please change the subject. Do you know..."

...she continued without giving me time to speak, "that the only way I can be reconciled to this place and the sights we have seen is to imagine I am in Canton or Peking, thousands of miles from home? Seen there, it is interesting, instructive, natural—a part of the people. As a part of San Francisco it is only vile."

"Come this way," said Corson, halting with the party at one of the doors. "I'll show you the rough some of the opium dens, and then I'll bring us to the stage door of the theater."

"How close and how by the air is!" said Luella, as we followed the winding passage in the dim illumination that came from an occasional gas jet or oil lamp.

"The yellow man is a firm believer in the motto, 'Ventilation is the root of all evil,' I admitted."

The fumes of tobacco and opium were heavy on the air, and a moment later we came on a cluster of small rooms or dens, fitted with couches and bunks. It needed no description to make the purpose plain. The whole process of intoxication by opium was before me, from the heating of the metal pipe to the final stupor that is the gift and end of the Black Smoke.

Here, a coolie mixing the drug; there, just beyond him, was another, drawing whiffs from the bubbling narcotic through the bamboo handle of his pipe; there, still beyond, was another, lying back unconscious, half-clad, repulsive, a very sorry reality indeed to the gorgeous dreams that are reputed to follow in the train of the seductive pipe.

"This is depressing," said Luella, with a touch on my arm. "Let's go on."

"Turn to the right there," Corson called out, as we led the way while he was explaining to Mr. Carter the method of smoking.

"Let us get where there is some air," said Luella. "This odor is sickening."

We hastened on, and, turning to the right, soon came on two passages. One led up a stair, hidden by a turn after half a dozen steps. The other stretched 50 or 75 feet before us, and an oil lamp on a bracket at the farther end gave a smoky light to the passage and to a mean little court on which it appeared to open.

"We had better wait for the rest," said Luella cautiously.

As she spoke, one of the doors toward the farther end of the passage

swung back and a tall, heavy figure came out. My heart gave a great bound, and I felt without realizing it at the moment that Luella clutched my arm fiercely.

In the dim light the figure was the figure of the Wolf, the head was the head of the Wolf and though no light



IN THE DIM LIGHT THE FIGURE WAS THE FIGURE OF THE WOLF

shone upon it, the face was the face of the Wolf, livid, distorted with anger, fear and brutal passions.

"Doddridge Knapp!" I exclaimed, and gave a step forward.

It flashed on me that one mystery was explained. I had found out why the Doddridge Knapp of plot and counterplot, and the Doddridge Knapp who was the generous and confidential employer, could dwell in the same body.

The King of the Street was a slave of the Black Smoke, and, like many another, went mad under the influence of the subtle drug.

As I moved forward, Luella clung to me and gave a low cry. The Wolf figure threw one malignant look at us and was gone.

"Take me home, oh, take me home!" cried Luella in low suppressed tones, trembling and half-falling. I put my arm about her to support her.

"What is it?" I asked.

She leaned upon me for one moment, and the black walls and gloomy passage became a palace filled with flowers. Then her strength and resolution returned and she shook herself free.

"Come; let us go back to the others," she said a little unsteadily. "We should not have left them."

"Certainly," I replied. "They ought to be here by this time."

But as we turned a sudden cry sounded as of an order given. There was a bang of wood and a click of metal, and as we looked we saw that unseen hands had closed the way to our return. A barred and iron-bound door was locked in our faces.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Battle in the Maze.

For an instant I was overwhelmed with terror and self-reproach. The bolted door before me gave notice of danger as plainly as though the word had been painted upon its front. The dark and lowering walls of the passage in which the Wolf figure of Doddridge Knapp had appeared and disappeared whispered threats. And I, in my folly and carelessness, had brought Luella Knapp into this place and exposed her to the dangers that encircled me. It was this thought that for the moment unnerved me.

"What does this mean?" asked Luella in a matter-of-fact tone.

"It is a poor practical joke, I fear," said I lightly. I took occasion to shift a revolver to my overcoat pocket.

"Well, aren't you going to get me out of here?" she asked with a little suggestion of impatience.

"That is my present intention," I replied, beating a tattoo on the door.

"You'll hurt your fists," she said. "You must find some way besides beating it down."

"I'm trying to bring our friends here," said I. "They should have been with us before now."

"Isn't there another way out?" asked Luella.

"I suspect there are a good many ways out," I replied, "but, unfortunately, I don't know them." And I gave a few resounding kicks on the door.

"Where does this stairway go, I wonder?" said Luella. "It can't be the way out. Isn't there another?"

"We might try the passage," I said, and gave a shudder and shrank toward the door.

"No, no," she cried in a low voice. "Try the door again. Somebody must hear you, and it may be opened."

I followed her suggestion with a rain of kicks, emphasizing with a shout that made the echoes ring gloomily in the passage.

I heard in reply a sound of voices, and then an answering shout, and the steps of men running.

"Are you there, Mr. Wilson?" cried the voice of Corson through the door.

"Yet, all safe, I answered.

"Well, just hold on a bit and we'll—"

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The rest of his sentence was lost in a suppressed scream from Luella. I turned and darted before her, just in time to face three Chinese ruffians who were hastening down the passage. The nearest of the trio, a tall dark savage with a deep scar across his cheek, was just reaching out his hand to seize Luella when I sprang forward and planted a blow square upon his chin. He fell back heavily, lifted almost off his feet by my impact, and lay like a log on the floor.

The other two ruffians halted irresolute for an instant, and I drew my revolver. Their wish seemed to be to take me alive if possible. After a moment of hesitation there was a muttered exclamation and one of the desperadoes drew his hand from his blouse.

"Oh!" cried Luella. "He's got a knife!"

Before he could make another movement I fired once, twice, three times. There was a scramble and scuffle in the passageway, and the smoke rolled thick in front, blotting out the scene that had stood in silhouette before us.

Fearful of a rush from the Chinese, I threw one arm about Luella, and, keeping my body between her and possible attack, guided her to the stair that led upward at nearly right angles from the passage. She was trembling and her breath came short, but her spirit had not quailed. She shook herself free as I placed her on the first step.

"Have you killed them?" she asked quietly.

"I hope so," I replied, looking cautiously around the corner to see the results of my fusillade. The smoke had spread into a thin haze through the passage.

"There's one fellow there," I said. "But it's the one I knocked down."

"Can't you see the others?" inquired Luella.

"No more in sight," said I, after a bolder survey. "They've run away."

"Oh, I'm glad," said Luella. "I should have seen them always if you had killed them. Why did they attack us?"

Before I could reply to Luella's question, a tattoo was beaten upon the door and a muffled shout came from the other side. I stepped down from the stair to listen.

"Are you hurt?" shouted Corson. "What's the matter?"

"No damage," I returned. "I drove them off."

Corson shouted some further words, but they were lost in a sudden murmur of voices and a scuffle of feet that arose behind.

"Look out!" cried Luella peremptorily. "Come back here!"

I have said that the passage opened into a little court, and at the end a lamp gave light to the court and the passage.

As I turned I saw a confusion of men pouring into the open space and heading for the passage. They were evidently Chinese, but in the gleam of the lamp I was sure I saw the evil face and snake-eyes of Tom Terrill. He was wrapped in the Chinese blouse, but I could not be mistaken. Then with a chorus of yells there was the crack of a pistol, and a bullet struck the door close to my ear.

(To be continued.)

BEAUTIFYING SUBURBS.

Value of Attractive Railway Grounds and Commercial Buildings.

Lowell maintained that he "loved to enter pleasure by a postern." But nobody is so constituted that he likes to enter a pleasure resort by the back door through a preliminary kitchen midden in the back yard. Yet this is what every American has to do whenever he betakes himself to such a resort. For that matter, it is what every commuter has to do every time he takes the evening train for home, says a writer in Scribner's Magazine. The eye of little employment having the daintier sense, according to Shakespeare, and afflictions inducing callousities, according to Sir Thomas Browne, this is by no means so grievous to the commuter as to the guest to whom he has sung the beauties of his suburban paradise and who has to go through a purgatory of a "business quarter" to reach the same. The paradise, when it is reached, may really come up to the brag, but the sensibilities of the visitor have been too much rasped to enable him to appreciate it.

Entering almost any American town, big or little, is in fact entering by an unkempt postern. The railroad itself seems to have an unfailing instinct for the slum, which it customarily creates. You cannot make the yard of an important station attractive, though you may make it highly impressive in its repulsiveness. But with regard to the suburbs and the resorts it is not the railroads which are most to blame. In fact, some of the most enlightened of them, quite comprehending that beauty is an asset for them in attracting settlers and commuters, take successful pains with the looks of their stations and of the immediate surroundings thereof. And, as everybody knows, it is in suburban work that our architecture is apt to show to the very best advantage. The improvement within a generation has been immense in the substitution of unpretending and homely picturesqueness in suburban cottages for cheap and tawdry display. But the movement has not in the least affected the suburban shopkeeper. The citizen of any of the great cities will have no difficulty in naming half a dozen of its suburbs which would be highly attractive if their commercial buildings were advanced to as high a plane as their residential buildings.

The Dijon Poplar.

A traveler in France speaks of a poplar tree that the writer saw in the city of Dijon, which is the oldest tree of its kind in France. It is 122 feet in height and is forty-five feet in circumference at the base. The city council has an authentic record of the history of the tree since the year 722. The people of Dijon are proud of it, so much so that they not long ago voted to levy a tax to put a railing around it, so that it might be protected from possible injury. It is good to see sentiment of this kind.

Questions and Answers.

When could the British empire be purchased for the lowest sum? When Richard III. offered his kingdom for a horse.

What is the largest room in the world? The room for improvement.

When may a man be said to breakfast before he gets up? When he takes a roll in bed.—Philadelphia Ledger.

The Old Hen's Yardstick.

A little boy and his sister were allowed to collect eggs from the hen-coops, but were told that they must never take away the nest egg. The little girl, however, did so one morning by mistake, and her brother told her she must take it right back "because that was what the old hen measured by."

Young Folks

ABOUT A WATCH.

Marvelous Feats Performed by the Most Delicate of Machines.

The watch is the smallest, most delicate machine that was ever constructed of the same number of parts. About 175 different pieces of material enter its construction, and upward of 2,400 separate operations are comprised in its manufacture.

Some of the facts connected with its performance are simply incredible when considered in total. A blacksmith strikes several thousand blows on his anvil in a day and is right glad when Sunday comes around, but the roller jewel of a watch makes every day and day after day 432,000 impacts against the fork, or 157,680,000 blows in a year without stop or rest, or 3,153,000,000 in the short space of twenty years.

These figures are beyond the grasp of our feeble intellects, but the marvel does not stop here. It has been estimated that the power that moves the watch is equivalent to only four times the force used in a flea's jump; consequently it might be called a four flea power. One horsepower would suffice to run 270,000,000 watches.

Now, the balance wheel of a watch is moved by this four flea power one and forty-three one-hundredths inches with each vibration—3,538 1/4 miles continuously in one year.—Chicago News.

Find the Seven Babies.

Here is an ancient but interesting puzzle:



One and one and one make three, any one would say upon glancing at this picture of the fine little boys, but it is not what you see first that is the right answer to the question. "How many are there? Look again, and perhaps you will be sharp enough to see that one and one and one make not three, but more than twice three—seven. Look among the squirming arms and legs, among the chubby hands and feet, and you cannot fail to make up the puzzling addition. And after you have found all seven of the baby boys take the picture and have some fun with your friends watching them fuss and fume that they cannot see more than the original three babies.

New Candy Game.

The hostess should write the following questions on sheets of paper, of course omitting the answers, and give one to each guest, awarding boxes of bonbons for prizes:

What candy is a spice and a money making establishment? Peppermint.

What sweets are wild flowers of the spring fields? Buttercups.

What goodies result when a sour fruit rolls off the table? Lemon drops.

What candy is a lively goat and a near neighbor of the English? Butter-scotch.

What candy is rubber and "to fall?" Gumdrop.

And which consists of a famous river in the east and a variety of nuts? Jordan almonds.

What candy good for the throat is gray with age and hunting dog? Horehound.

What American dainty is "to explode" and an important food product? Popcorn.

What species of caramels are an uncomplimentary exclamation? Fudge.

What popular flavor is likely holly and mistletoe? Wintergreen.

What bonbons should show which way the wind blows? Straws.

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Ignorance of Our Customs.

"What caused the hitch in the progress of the courtship of Miss Coynerox by the duke?" asks one interested party.

"He got the idea that her father didn't have any money," explained the other.

"But couldn't he look the matter up?"

"He thought he had. The trouble was he looked at the tax duplicate just after the old man had finished swearing off his assessment."—Judge.

One Way.

Child—Suppose I called you a mean old pig. What would happen? Governess—I should tell your father, and he would punish you. Child—And if I only thought it. Governess—No harm so long as you don't say it. Child—Then I only think it.—Life.

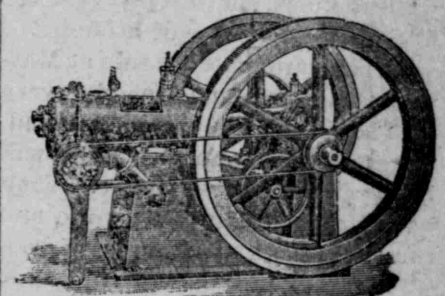
Consolated Her.

"Why do you wear that ridiculous hat?" he growled.

"Do you really think it ridiculous?" she replied graciously. "How lovely of you! I was afraid it wasn't quite the style!"

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The Wifely Letter.

A woman sent in a fire alarm yesterday when she posted a letter. It must have been to her husband.—Chicago Evening Post.